

REMARKS

In the Office Action of July 19, 2006 claims 1-5, 8-15, 18-19, and 26-30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 (b) as being anticipated by EP 0066463. Claims 1-64 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over EP 0066463 in view of EP 1212974.

Claims 1-64 have been provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over:

- claims 1-50 of co-pending Application No. 10/745,327 in view of EP 0066463;
- claims 1-91 of co-pending Application No. 10/733,169 in view of EP 0066463;
- claims 1-131 of co-pending Application No. 10/321,831 in view of EP 0066463;
- claims 1-220 of co-pending Application No. 10/322,277 in view of EP 0066463; and
- claims 1-132 of co-pending Application No. 10/036,736 in view of EP 0066463.

Applicants have amended claims 1, 33, and 52 to clearly indicate structural features of the scrubbing products. Specifically, each claim now includes the limitation that the plurality of apertures are formed and arranged such that the structure of the apertures contribute to the structural integrity of the liquid absorbent structure in the direction of the absorbent structure's thickness. Support for the claim language as amended can be found in the specification, including the discussion at page 43, lines 21 – 25 and further including discussion at page 48, lines 5 – 18.

As noted in the specification, depending upon how the apertures are formed, the apertures can also enhance the Z-directional strength of the absorbent structure (i.e. in the direction of the absorbent structure's thickness). For instance, the apertures can be formed using a heated pin or using ultrasonic bonding that causes two or more adjacent layers of the structure to bond together.

Applicants agree that EP '463 discusses joining layers of the product discussed

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therein by heat-sealing, adhesive, or ultrasonic sealing, and that EP '974 includes discussion of stitching. Furthermore, EP '463 discusses perforations. As noted in the Office Action, the teachings of EP '463 are relative to the release of additives, etc.

However, neither EP 0066463 nor EP 1212974 discuss a multilayer absorbent structure included in a cleaning product wherein the structural integrity of the product in the z-direction is derived at least in part from the configuration and arrangement of the apertures.

Since EP '463 does not discuss the use of apertures configured and arranged to enhance the structural integrity of the layered product in the z-direction, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the §102 rejections based thereon. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the §103 rejections since all elements as presently claimed are not present in the allegedly-obvious combinations based on EP '463 and EP '974.


With the present amendment and accompanying remarks, Applicants submit that all pending claims are patentable over the cited references. Favorable action thereon is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at her convenience to resolve any remaining issues.

Please charge any additional fees required by this Amendment to Deposit Account No. 04-1403.

Respectfully requested,

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Date: 18 Sept 2006